

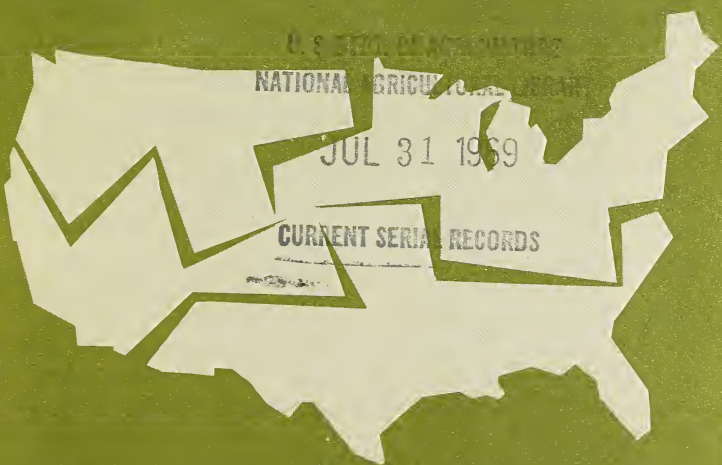
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FOOD MANAGEMENT IN A NATIONAL EMERGENCY

A GUIDE FOR
FOOD PROCESSORS
AND WHOLESALERS



CONSUMER AND MARKETING SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

PA-572

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Food Management in a National Emergency

In two World Wars in this century, America's farmers and the food industry met every challenge. The food needed by civilians, the military, and our allies was somehow produced, processed and distributed. Government's role was to guide, coordinate and assist farmers and the food industry in that task. In the global conflict of 1941-45, especially, this teamwork enabled the United States to help feed great areas of the world and in addition to take care of its own people.

The same farm-industry-government teamwork would assure that we can do this essential job again should another war occur. But the next war may bear little resemblance to anything we have known.

Today's weapons of war are sudden and devastating. There would likely be little or no time to gear up for emergency operations at even the astounding pace of World War II. From business as usual to the onset of nuclear attack could be a matter of hours. Or minutes. The time for planning a continuing supply of food for the Nation is *now*. Much has been done—but much, much more needs to be done.

Assumptions

No one knows the exact situation this Nation would face following a nuclear attack. However, to help in planning for emergency food management and in building an organization that could begin to operate with little or no startup time, some assumptions have been made, based on what we know about nuclear weapons. We must assume:

- Widespread disruption of transportation and communications, forcing many areas of the country to operate independently for varying lengths of time. And it's unlikely that damaged areas would conform with existing State, county or even city boundaries.
- Even in areas where there is little or no destruction, radioactive fallout or lack of fuel or power might make processing plants and other food facilities unusable for some period of time. Stored food, even when protected from fallout and thus safe for use, might be inaccessible for some time.
- In total, enough food probably would be on hand—the big problem would be one of getting it from where it is stored or processed to *where* it is needed *when* it is needed.
- In short, the food management problem after a nuclear attack would be to conserve food that survives, process it, and move it to where it is needed under conditions never before encountered.

Food Industry Role

Industry's role in a national emergency can be simply stated: To continue to process, store and distribute food to meet the Nation's needs. No government agency can do, or is planning to do that job. Industry will, however, need certain kinds of help from government.

Preparation for the industry role is a complex task requiring cooperative effort with USDA. All segments of the food industry must know the national plans and objectives. Similarly, USDA needs to know more about the food industry and its capabilities and requirements. This includes:

- Food resource identification and evaluation—where are the food facilities—what do they do—where do they get raw material? Such data will help USDA make preliminary estimates of consumable food supplies likely to be available as well as estimates of actual food facility survival postattack.
- Nonfood needs—the effect of loss or curtailment of the power, chemicals, repair parts, equipment, water, fuel and myriad other goods and services used by food processors and distributors.
- Alternative means of maintaining processing and distribution—exploration of such devices as formula changes to conserve scarce ingredients, substitution of alternative foods, stockpiling of potentially scarce foods or fuels, and other means of keeping the food plant operative.
- To be able to deal with food processing and distribution problems during an emergency, data and information of the sort outlined above must be developed during “the pre-emergency period.” This requires cooperation between industry and USDA.

USDA Emergency Organization

USDA has a field organization learning how to handle food production and supply-management problems a nuclear attack could bring on. Agencies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have been assigned emergency duties akin to their regular functions. USDA State and County Defense Boards have been established to function on their own in an emergency when communications are cut off. USDA is working closely with State governments, producer groups, and more and more with agri-business leaders in this effort.

The Executive Directors of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service State offices are Chairmen of the USDA State Defense Boards. ASCS county office managers serve as USDA County Defense Board Chairmen. Members of the boards at both levels include local Federal or Federal-State employees of major agencies of USDA in the locality.

Food Management Responsibilities of USDA

Emergency "food management" responsibilities of the U. S. Department of Agriculture have been assigned by the Secretary to the Consumer and Marketing Service (C&MS). Basically, the C&MS job is to preplan how best to conserve food, get it processed, and properly distributed after an attack on the United States, and to help restore processing, storage, handling and distribution facilities to keep food moving.

The C&MS part of the job starts at the farm gate and extends through the wholesaler level in the distribution chain. By agreement, a part of these responsibilities will be shared with State governments in some States. Generally, however, the State and local governments will be concerned principally with distribution of food at the retail level, and with development of consumer rationing or other programs to assure equitable sharing of consumers' supplies.

Objectives

The emergency preparedness program of USDA has the following basic objectives:

- To develop plans for the conservation, efficient processing, and orderly and equitable distribution and use of food under emergency conditions.
- Through guidance and training, to develop in the USDA emergency organization a capability to administer the food management program.
- To disseminate information to the food industry on the role it would play in an emergency to keep food moving through distribution channels.

Food Management Plans

USDA's Consumer and Marketing Service has developed some fundamental approaches to food management in an emergency. In keeping with the assumptions and objectives, the C&MS preparedness effort is directed toward development of (1) an increasing knowledge of the food industry, existing marketing practices and normal distribution channels, (2) an understanding of the impact of a nuclear attack on this food complex, and (3) a capability to deal with the emergency problems an attack would create.

The "perfect" food management plan has not been developed—it may never be developed. But the greater the effort to construct good plans now, the better able we'll be to cope with situations that would arise. What we learn from study and thinking now will be of assistance in the improvisation and invention necessary to keep food moving following a nuclear attack.

The impact of a nuclear attack on the Nation would preclude the operation of centrally directed national programs of the type employed in World War II. Also, the

unequal impact of an attack on different geographic areas would call for variations in program requirements, depending on severity of attack damage, level and accessibility of surviving food supplies, and other factors. This situation would call for a flexible program, adaptable to administration at whatever level of government might be dictated by postattack conditions. Thus, initial guidance and direction of food processing and distribution probably would come from USDA State or County Defense Boards. Common-sense principles that would guide their operations include the following:

- First using the perishable, frozen foods lacking refrigeration, and damaged foods for which the best salvage is immediate consumption.
- Conservation of food in the national interest would be vital in areas able to function normally, or nearly so. Conversion of perishable commodities to storable items would be considered when feasible.
- Maximum use of locally-produced foods in all areas would be necessary to conserve labor, fuels and transportation.
- Maximum distribution levels for consumer food rationing during the immediate postattack period would be established by State and local governments, further providing for the conservation and equitable distribution of the food supply among the surviving population.

State and County Defense Boards would carry out necessary food management programs through the food industry. Key elements in the food management program include:

- **Standby Defense Food Order** - The principal tool or mechanism available is a standby defense food order known as Defense Food Order No. 2 (DFO No. 2). By design, the Order encourages and allows food processors and wholesalers (including chain store warehouses) to serve their regular customers—to the extent possible—with a minimum of regulation and control.

Those controls determined to be needed will be carried out through Suborders. Suborders would be used to limit the use of food and ingredients, to limit distribution, and to provide for other measures as necessary.

The Order and Suborders will be issued and administered by County Defense Boards when lack of adequate communications precludes direction by State Defense Boards. However, State Defense Boards will assume direction as soon as possible. Similarly, when conditions permit, a more coordinated national program will replace the more fragmented, but necessary, county and State programs.

Processors and distributors will establish "bases" for their customers and will supply those customers in accordance with criteria and limitations established by County and State Defense Boards. The boards will adjust bases and distribution rates as dictated by emergency conditions and overall supply limitations.

Provision will be made to assure the military establishment of adequate supplies of food. To the extent possible, normal sources of supply would be utilized.

The Food Order and Suborders provide the flexibility needed during the period immediately following an attack to deal with the variable supply levels and differing postattack environment in different geographic areas.

- **Procurement** - USDA would do some buying for allies or other government agencies, and perhaps to supply mass feeding centers. Military procurement would be done with USDA cooperation and assistance.
- **Requisitioning** - Generally, requisitioning of food by USDA would be limited to situations in which the owners of badly-needed food are dead, missing, or beyond reach by available communications. The requisitions thus would relieve warehousemen and carriers of responsibility to the owner and guarantee payment of all proper charges.
- **Guarantee of Payment** - USDA is exploring a means of guaranteeing payment to sellers for food delivered as authorized. Suppliers to food handling facilities would need similar guarantees. This would be a practical way of helping the food industry perform its emergency function.

Industry and government working together can—and will—meet the challenge. The C&MS office with which you deal regularly will be glad to discuss your problems with you and give you further detailed information as it becomes available.

Revised July 1969

NOTE: If it should ever be necessary to use the Standby Defense Food Order described above, its effectiveness will depend, at least in part, on the extent to which the Order and the role of individual food concerns are understood. Accordingly, copies of the Order have been widely distributed through food trade organizations. Additional copies can be obtained by writing the Defense Programs Branch, Transportation and Warehouse Division, Consumer and Marketing Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

